NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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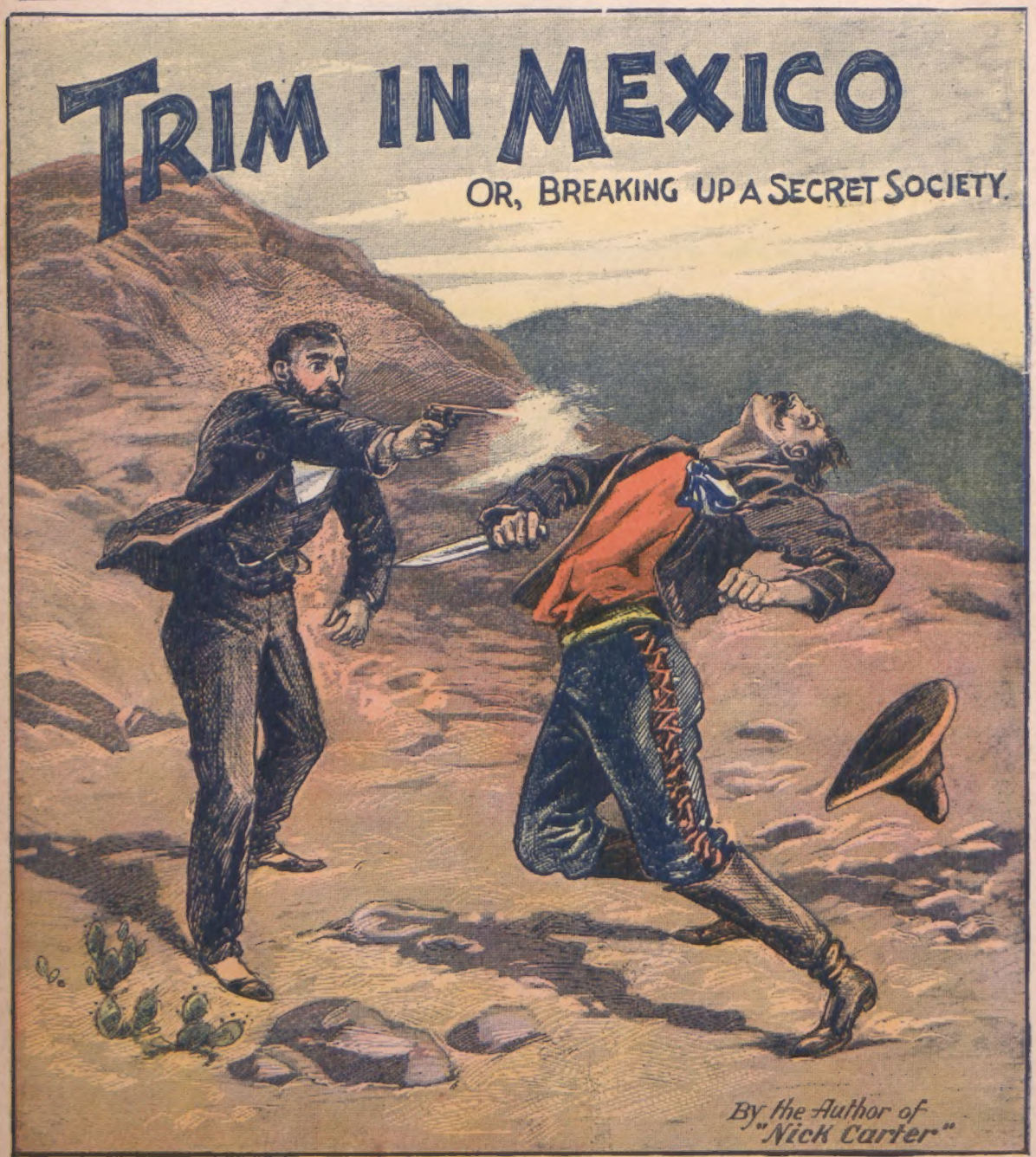
TRIM IN MEXICO

OR, BREAKING UP A SECRET SOCIETY.



By the Author of "Nick Carter"

THE SHOT FROM HIS REVOLVER FOUND A SURE MARK.

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TRIM IN MEXICO

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By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

THE SIGN OF CROSSED KNIVES.

"Trim, I want to tell you a story."

It was Nick Carter who thus addressed the young detective one morning shortly after breakfast.

Two or three days before, Trim had completed some brilliant work in connection with a great conspiracy against the lives and fortunes of the wealthy Van Alstines which has been described in previous numbers of this library.

There had been a breathing spell then, during which he had handled two or three small cases that presented no especial difficulties and that would hardly be worth the telling.

The young fellow was anxious for another hard problem, because it was only when the difficulties were great that he thoroughly enjoyed his work.

From the tone in which Nick spoke to him, Trim knew perfectly well that another case demanding the best of skill was at hand.

"Nick Carter never tells stories for amusement," he reflected as he followed his great chief into the library.

"I suppose, Trim," said Nick when they had taken chairs opposite each other at a table, "that you're quite ready to dip into another matter that may put your life in danger?"

"Certainly," Trim answered quietly; "I may get done up some of these days, but as long as I've got any life left in me I don't think I shall be backward in tackling any case no matter what it is!"

"No matter where it is?" inquired Nick.

"I am ready to start for the south pole if necessary," was the reply.

"It isn't necessary, but the matter will probably take you pretty far from home.

"I believe you have never been in Mexico, have you?"

"I've seen a little of the northern part

of it, that is the district lying along the Rio Grande."

"This is in an entirely different part of the country, but that won't matter; of course you are well up in Spanish?"

"I learned Spanish," Trim answered, "almost as soon as I did English.

"You know it is spoken a great deal in the far Western States?"

"Yes, and you don't hear the best of Spanish out there either."

"Not much," said Trim with a smile, "it is mostly dialect that wouldn't be understood in Spain!"

"That will help you in this work, for it is my opinion that the people you will have to meet while speaking Spanish more than anything else, will yet use a dialect that would puzzle an ordinary scholar.

"However, I'll tell you the story that I spoke of and then we'll see.

"About a year ago a New Yorker, named John Parmenter, was traveling in Mexico.

"He had three or four members of his family with him.

"Parmenter wasn't exactly an ordinary tourist, although he traveled about in an easy way and didn't let anybody know that he was really on a business errand.

"Early in his life Parmenter had been a California miner.

"He had made his pile and for a good number of years had been content to live on his income and see the world without doing any work.

"The hard times hit him, and although his fortune was by no means wrecked, he suffered some, and as he was tired of taking things easily, he decided to look around quietly for new mining property.

"With his experience he wasn't the kind of man to look for mining property in Wall Street.

"He also fought shy of the gold and silver fields of our Western States, because anything he might get hold of there would be put at such a high price that the investment would be risky.

"What Parmenter wanted was to discover a new field.

"Like everybody else he knew that silver is found in great quantities in Mexico and that there are some good gold mines there; so while he pretended to knock about for the fun of it, exploring volcanoes and poking around among the ruins of ancient cities, he was all the time looking for signs of gold.

"He found them after a time in the State of Jalisco.

"This is situated almost due west of the City of Mexico and one of its boundaries is the Pacific Ocean.

"It is an exceedingly mountainous district, some of the greatest volcanoes in the world lying there.

"Parmenter found the signs of gold on a portion of one of these great volcanoes known as Colima.

"This is an immense mountain, in fact it might better be called a group of mountains for it covers a great territory and is surrounded by a lot of hills that would be regarded as high mountains in this part of the world.

"I speak of that matter in order to show why Parmenter had to employ a guide.

"Colima has been visited by men of science so that in one sense it is pretty well known.

"You may find it described if you care to look it up in two or three different books; but that doesn't mean that it is a familiar district like Pike's Peak, for example.

"There are miles and miles of land all along the slopes of the mountain that have never been explored by white men.

"The people who live in the State of Jalisco are partly whites of Spanish descent and partly native Indians.

"The Indians are seldom found in the villages but have their settlements among the mountains.

"Parmenter had been traveling around through the State exploring one mountain after another for quite a while before he finally took up his quarters in the village of Guzman.

"There was a pretty fair hotel there, so much better in fact than most of the places at which he had put up, that he fixed upon it as his headquarters.

"He left his family there and went off on trips, sometimes of several days' length, into the mountains with a guide.

"On one of these trips, Parmenter's

guide met with a little accident that laid him up for a few days.

"As Parmenter had already seen indications of gold-bearing quartz on Colima, he was anxious to pursue his search without delay, so he looked around for another guide.

"There was a Spaniard named Antonio loafing around the hotel who heard of the situation and asked Parmenter to employ him.

"A few questions satisfied Parmenter that Antonio knew the country well and accordingly they struck a bargain.

"They started off the following morning with the intention of being gone at least a week.

"They carried a small quantity of provisions with them, meaning to depend partly upon fishing and shooting for food.

"It took them one long day's tramp to get beyond the region of well-traveled roads.

"The second day they plunged into the forest and went by paths known only to the Indians and the guides, aiming to reach a certain spur of the mountain where Parmenter believed he should find the best part of the ledge that looked like a gold-bearing reef.

"They arrived at a suitable place for camping at about midday and having rigged up some sort of shelter, began a systematic exploring of the mountain side.

"It was toward the end of the afternoon when they were crossing an open space on the mountain slope that Antonio, who was walking ahead of Parmenter, turned around suddenly and without a word of warning, raised a knife over his employer's head, catching Parmenter at the same time by the throat.

"The Mexican evidently had misunderstood Parmenter's character.

"Probably he had supposed that Parmenter was what he seemed to be, a wealthy man with a fancy for exploring and a man without any experience in dealing with tough characters, but as I have told you Parmenter had roughed it before.

"He had been through exciting adventures in California and although he was taken by surprise he was by no means slow in resisting the attack.

"He warded off the blow of the descending knife and shook himself free, then he stepped back a pace to prepare for any further attack.

"It came instantly.

"Antonio, suprised and enraged at the failure of his first assault, leaped upon Parmenter, again making a dive for him with the knife.

"If they had come to close quarters there is hardly a doubt that Parmenter would have been done up for Antonio was a younger man and exceedingly active.

"At the best, Parmenter would have been badly wounded.

"The American wouldn't take chances. He whipped out his revolver with a Western man's quickness and accuracy and fired!

"The bullet went straight to its target!

"Antonio threw up both hands, leaped into the air and fell over upon his back.

"He had been instantly killed!"

"Served him right!" remarked Trim.

"Doubtless," assented Nick.

"I'm telling you the story you understand exactly as it was told to me.

"There were no witnesses to the affair but I'm certain enough that we have the story straight.

"Well, Parmenter was a good deal shaken up by what had happened.

"Not a word had passed between them in the very short struggle!

"He supposed naturally that Antonio had attacked him for the purpose of robbery.

"Parmenter carried a valuable watch and he had three or four jewels about him in the way of shirt studs, etc.

"Anyhow, here he was in the wilderness with his dead guide before him.

"He realized that he was in a foreign country and that it would be impossible, if he cared to try it, to get away from Guzman without saying something or other about what had happened.

"If he returned without his guide questions would be asked; then if he should claim not to know what had become of Antonio, suspicions would be aroused.

"If he should leave Guzman, a search

party would be organized and Antonio's body would certainly be found.

"Yes, before Parmenter could possibly get across the boundary to this country he would surely be overtaken.

"As a matter of fact, Parmenter did not seriously think of doing anything of this kind, but the thought occurred to him during the first few minutes when he was recovering from the shock of the event.

"It seemed to him that the only safe and proper act was to make his way as well as he could, back to Guzman and lay the matter frankly before the authorities there.

"He gathered up such of the camp materials as he could carry conveniently and set out.

"He had not gone far before night came on and rather than risk going through the forest in the dark, he bunked under a tree and waited for daylight.

"Next morning he found that he had slept near a place where the very dim trail divided.

"He couldn t remember for the life of him which of these paths he had come up when Antonio was guiding him.

"Parmenter had not marked his trail in any way because he had depended wholly upon his guide.

"He had given his whole attention to looking for gold-bearing quartz, so that the long and short of it was, that he was lost.

"As often happens in such cases he took the wrong trail.

"He journeyed along it for half a day before he became convinced that he had made a mistake and then he tried to retrace his steps.

"He wasn't very successful in this for he could not go as far up the mountain in the afternoon as he had gone down it in the forenoon. Then he made the mistake of trying to push on after nightfall with the result of getting more and more hopelessly tangled.

"He spent pretty nearly the whole of the next day in trying to find the first trail and after he had failed in that, he made up his mind that he must choose a certain drection and follow it straight on in the hope that it would bring him somewhere at last.

"It had then become very cloudy so that he could not make out with any accuracy the position of the sun.

"Giving as good a guess as possible he started in a southwesterly direction, believing that that would bring him to Guzman or at the worst to the sea coast in time.

"Well, what with being delayed with a terrific storm and getting into gorges and thickets, where progress was impossible and having to go back over his course several times, it was ten days and more before he finally got well away from Colima and came to a little village where he was directed to Guzman.

"He had not suffered much from hunger during this experience, for being a clever shot he killed game enough to support life.

"He was pretty well worn out however and you can imagine his dismay when he crawled into Guzman just as a searching party was returning from Colima bringing with them the dead body of Antonio.

"The fact that Antonio was found with a bullet in him was proof enough that Parmenter had killed him and the fact that Parmenter had not turned up was taken by the Mexicans as proof that there had been deliberate murder.

'Therefore you see it became a pretty hard matter for Parmenter to convince the people that he had shot Antonio in self-defense.

"There was a good deal of wild talk about lynching, but clear heads in the town prevented that and at Parmenter's own suggestion it was agreed that the matter should be laid before the authorities at Manzanillo, the chief city in that State.

"It is a seaport on the Pacific and not many miles from Guzman.

"They went there and partly through the efforts of the United States Consul at that place, Parmenter was releaed.

"The magistrate before whom he was taken expressed himself as convinced that Parmenter was innocent and that the killing of Antonio was justifiable.

" 'You are free to go, Mr. Parmenter,' he said in a private conversation after the examination, 'but if you will take my advice you'll lose no time in going.'

"Parmenter answered, 'but I have buiness here——'

" 'No matter,' interrupted the magistrate, 'you'd better not stay.

" 'If you care for your life more than possible business you will not risk the vengeance that may be attempted by Antonio's friends.'

" 'Won't the law protect me as much as it will any other man?' asked Parmenter.

" 'Certainly,' the magistrate answered, 'but while the law will protect you as well as possible and while it will punish Antonio's friends if they attempt to harm you, they are likely to get in their work before the law knows what they are about.'

"Now, Parmenter didn't relish this kind of advice at all.

"He had suffered a good deal by the adventure and had lost valuable time.

"He was certain that he had discovered valuable property and he was bound that he would not be frightened away, so he remained.

"His family begged him to return at once to the United States, but he refused.

"He did however yield to them to this extent.

"Instead of returning to Guzman he remained in Manzanillo, while he bargained for the purchase of a big tract of land on Colima Mountain.

"For two weeks he went about his business and nothing occurred to disturb him.

"He had completed the purchase of the tract, where, as he believed a big fortune awaited him, when one morning upon the outside the bedroom door occupied by himself he saw a little paper label.

"It was circular and not much bigger than a one-cent piece. He was quite certain that it had not been there the night before.

"It gave him something of a start, not because it was a piece of paper stuck on during the night, but because there was a little picture roughly drawn upon it.

"It represented a pair of knives crossed.

"Parmenter's experienced eye recognized in this the sign of a secret society and he immediately suspected that it was in some way connected with the death of Antonio.

"The members of his family were much terrified and urged him to leave Manzanillo at once.

"He believed however that that would be more dangerous than to remain there, and besides his stubborn pride was up and he was bound he would not run before the enemy.

"He did not even report the matter to the police.

"He made a few inquiries at the hotel as to how the label came upon his door but nobody could give him any satisfaction.

"Before the day was over, Parmenter had become half convinced that the whole thing was the work of a practical joker who was staying at the hotel and who had heard of the adventure of Antonio.

"That evening Parmenter was found dead, stabbed in a dozen places, in a short quiet street only a few paces from the hotel."

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CHAPTER II.

RELENTLESS ENEMIES.

"Ah!" remarked Trim, "you've given me a surprise. I thought all along that Mr. Parmenter was to be our client."

"Mr. Parmenter is our client," responded Nick, "but not the one who was killed by the Mexican assassins!

"His son Warren was with him at the time and it is Warren Parmenter who now comes to us for assistance."

Trim nodded to show that he understood and Nick continued:

"As I told you, Parmenter had some members of his family with him.

"They included his wife, a young daughter and this son, Warren.

"I believe they also had a servant traveling with them, but apparently the servant doesn't count.

"All we need to concern ourselves with at present is young Warren Parmenter, who now wishes to return to Mexico in order to develop the property that his father acquired there."

"I should have thought," remarked Trim, "that he would have sold out the property and cut lose from Mexico at the first chance."

"Most men would have done so," said Nick, "but young Parmenter has his father's spirit, his love of adventure and all his determination.

"He did cut lose from Mexico as fast as he could at the time of his father's death, but that was simply in order that he might protect his mother and sister and also to arrange matters so that he could return and look after his interests."

"Did he have any trouble in getting away?"

"Rather!" answered Nick emphatically.

"The experience he had shows that his father was attacked by members of probably the most cold-blooded society of criminals in the world.

"You know something about the Society of the Mafia, I suppose?"

"Yes, indeed!" responded Trim.

"You know that the vengeance of the Mafia is far reaching and that its members are very desperate, but you also know that, bad as they are, they don't unusually commit murder merely for the sake of killing!"

"No," said Trim, "I didn't suppose anybody did that!"

"The Nanigos do."

"The what?"

"Nanigos. It is a word that means nothing in itself; it was invented by the members of this society who are Spaniards, at least, Spaniards by descent.

"The society has branches in various parts of America, particularly in Cuba and Mexico.

"They speak a kind of jargon which is half Spanish and half made up of words which they have invented.

"There is no doubt that they frequently kill for the sake of robbery but there is also little doubt that they commit murder for its own sake, that is, no man is considered a good Nanigo until he has killed at least one man.

"You will probably learn a good deal more about them than I can tell you, but I give you this as a starter in order that you may be sure that you're going to tackle an exceedingly dangerous gang of men.

"I don't suppose there is any doubt that the guide, Antonio, was a Nanigo.

"Probably the magistrate who examined Parmenter suspected as much and for that reason advised him to leave the country as soon as possible.

"Just why the Nanigos didn't attack Parmenter immediately after his release I can't say, but possibly it was because the gang were scattered over the State and it may have taken time to get them together, for it goes without saying that such a man could not have been struck down by a single assassin.

"There must have been as many as there were dagger wounds upon his body."

"How many was that?" asked Trim.

"Seven or eight.

"It seems that the elder Parmenter had left the hotel shortly after dark simply for the purpose of buying cigars of a particular brand that he liked and that were to be had only in a little store a few rods from the hotel.

"He bought the cigars for they were found in his pocket.

"The cigar dealer of course was examined but the authorities couldn't get anything out of him; quite likely he was entirely innocent and knew no more about the affair than anybody else."

"It must have been a quick job!" remarked Trim.

"It was indeed, for it was only about half an hour after Parmenter left the hotel when a policeman called there to notify Mrs. Parmenter that her husband's body had been found bleeding in the street.

"Of course it was a terrible experience for Mrs. Parmenter and the young people, but the son, Warren, seems to have been equal to the emergency.

"He took charge of affairs and insisted that the authorities make a thorough investigation.

"This was done, at least the Mexicans called it thorough, but nothing more was learned than what I have told you.

"The Mexicans were certain that the deed was done by Nanigos and that seemed to settle it in their minds.

"Having found out that much they stopped all effort, for in their opinion the tracing of a Nanigo crime is an impossibility.

"They simply repeated the magistrate's advice that the Parmenters cut clear of

Mexico as soon as possible, for they declared that the vengeance of the Nanigos extended to all members of a victim's family.

"Warren Parmenter had reason to believe that this was true, for hardly had his father's body been buried and right while the police were supposed to be investigating the affair, he found one of these little tags upon his bedroom door.

"The young man was inclined to see the thing through and fight it out much as his father tried to do, but his mother and sister were so shocked by the tragedy that he felt bound to care for them.

"He let it be understood that he was going to leave Manzanillo at once.

"He engaged a wagon for the purpose of being driven to Mexico City.

"The nearest railway is fully two hundred miles from Manzanillo, so that a wagon journey was a necessity.

"With a great pretense at secrecy he carefully let his route be known. Then, after making a start and getting well away from the town he changed his course completely and started toward the northwest intending to reach San Blas, were he hoped to catch a coastwise steamer and so make his way up to San Francisco.

"Apparently his ruse was effective for the family traveled among the mountains for two days without seeing any signs of their enemies.

"At the end of the third day they came to a town called Ameca.

"This was a railway station.

"From there they could go either to Mexico, a long journey with more than one change of cars, or they could take train direct for San Blas about one hundred miles to the north.

"There were no trains leaving Ameca in either direction that night, but they found by looking up time-tables, that early next morning two trains would leave at the same time, one for the interior and the other for the coast.

"It was hard to decide which train to take.

"If they should go on to Mexico they could hope to make connections by which in the course of a couple of days they could get across the border to the United States, or they might go from Mexico to Vera Cruz and perhaps catch a steamer there for New Orleans.

"On the other hand there was the chance that by going to San Blas they could get a steamer at once and so get away from the country more quickly.

"They had not fully decided which course to take when they retired for the night.

"Young Parmenter was rather inclined to go toward the City of Mexico because if that course proved successful they would get out of the country sooner than by taking the other route.

"He was feeling quite safe from interference by the Nanigos, because as I have said there had been no sign of them during their three days' wagon journey.

"He got up at daybreak the next morning because whichever way they went they would have to make an early start, and he was considerably startled to find one of those wretched little tags stuck upon his bedroom door.

"This was proof enough that although he had thrown the enemy off the trail by his clever trick at Manzanillo, they had discovered the fraud, had chased him up and overtaken him.

"Well, he hastily scratched the tag off the door so that his mother or sister might not chance to see it, then he aroused them, breakfasted with them and escorted them to the railway station.

"He had timed his movements so that he arrived at the station just a moment or two before the trains were due to start away.

"They left at the same time, one going in one direction and the other, as I said in another.

"Young Parmenter went to the ticket office and bought three tickets to Mexico City.

"The train for that place was directly in front of the station and on the next track just beyond, was the train for San Blas.

"Parmenter led his party into the train for which he had bought tickets, took them through the entire length of two cars and then quickly left it and got on board the other train.

"By so doing his movements were concealed from the view of any who might be watching from the station platform.

"They had hardly entered the second train before it started.

"His mother and sister naturally were surprised at his movements but he gave them no explanation.

"Making some reasonable excuse he left them for a moment and went to the rear platform of the train.

"From there he could look back upon the station.

"He saw the train for Mexico drawing away, leaving a number of men scattered about the station platform; of course that meant nothing to him.

"He hoped that his enemies had gone on the other train or that they had been left behind.

"It didn't seem possible that they could have taken the same train with him.

"As he went back through the cars to rejoin his mother and sister he studied the faces of the passengers, but saw none that seemed suspicious.

"It looked as if he had completely outwitted the Nanigos and his feelings of security grew as the train approached San Blas.

"He kept his eyes open nevertheless when he and his people left the train at the terminus, but even then he could not observe that any of the passengers were watching him.

"He took his mother and sister into the waiting room of the station and hunted up a policeman in order to make inquiries about the sailing of boats.

"He had never been in San Blas and so had to ask all sorts of questions even to the names of hotels and streets.

"As he approached a policeman to ask these questions he overheard a voice saying:

" 'There they are.'

"He turned quickly and saw two ordinary-looking Mexicans crossing the waiting room toward the door leading to the platform.

" 'I'm a fool,' he reflected, 'to suppose that every remark I hear is meant for me;' so he went on and spoke to the policeman.

"The latter told him that a boat was leaving for San Francisco within an hour.

"This seemed to young Parmenter a piece of great good luck for he could not help being nervous after hearing that remark.

"He knew that if he had thrown the Nanigos off the track at Ameca, they would soon discover it and might likely come on to San Blas by the next train.

"Therefore it would be the surest way to avoid trouble to hurry to this boat and get clear of the country before any other train could arrive.

"Accordingly he hustled his people into a carriage and ordered the driver to go to the steamboat wharf.

"As Parmenter did not know the way he can't be certain whether the driver played him any trick or not, but he does know that the route taken seemed to be very roundabout and that it was a long time before they came to the docks.

"Parmenter had been looking at his watch every other minute and had grown actuallly nervous lest they should arrive too late for the boat.

"Indeed they didn't arrive until just as preparations were being made to take in the gangplank.

"Parmenter shouted to the men who had their hands upon the pulley ropes and they waited for him.

"He tossed some money to the driver and fairly drove his mother and sister to the boat.

"They started up the plank ahead of him and just as he was three or four paces from the dock a couple of men leaped from the crowd that were watching the departure of the steamer and made for him.

"The movement was so sudden, so unexpected by everybody, except possibly, Parmenter, who would not have been surprised at anything, that the men got upon the plank before the steamship employees could prevent them.

"For that matter the employees may have thought that they were belated passengers.

"Anyhow they rushed after Parmenter, drawing their knives as they went.

"At the same time two others came running along by the edge of the dock and climbed upon the plank to take part in the assault.

"Warned by a startled cry from the spectators on the pier, Mrs. Parmenter

and her daughter turned about just as they had come to the top of the plank.

"They screamed and would have gone to the assistance of the young man but that steamship officers seized them and dragged them on board.

"Well, Parmenter warded off the blow aimed at him by the first man in the attacking party and caught the fellow squarely under the jaw with his fist.

"As Parmenter stood a little higher on the plank than the other, the force of his blow was all the stronger.

"The man staggered back against his companion and both fell.

"By that time the other two had climbed upon the plank and were coming at Parmenter full force.

"He recognized in them the two men whom he had seen passing through the railway station waiting room.

"He reached for his hip pocket to get his revolver, but there was no time to draw it, so he struck out with his fists, getting two or three long but not dangerous gashes upon his left arm from the knives the fellows carried.

"The young man must have been a good fighter and he might have done them up single handed, but there's no telling what would have happened.

"The fact is, that the officer in charge of the gangplank being terribly excited at this affair, thought that he would do a good thing by having the plank pulled away suddenly.

"He gave the order and right while Parmenter and his enemies were at the height of their struggle the plank suddenly dropped.

"It was at that instant that Parmenter got in a pretty strong blow upon the man nearest to him.

"This man staggered from the force of the blow and unbalanced by the sudden movement of the plank, toppled over the little rail into the water.

"Parmenter, quick to see what was happening, turned about and gave a jump toward the boat.

"He caught his hands upon the rail and was pulled up by officers who stood there.

"The plank fell to the ground and pitched one other man into the water.

"Of course there was great excitement there, but what was the end of it, Parmenter never learned with certainty.

"The boat cast off at once and the last Parmenter saw there was an excited crowd upon the dock fishing out the two men who had fallen into the water.

"As you may suppose, young Parmenter had plenty to do for the next hour or two in calming his mother and sister and in having his slight wounds attended to.

"The rest of the voyage however was without any serious incident.

"The boat touched at one or two other Mexican ports, but no trouble was experienced from Nanigos or any other enemy.

"After a rather long voyage the party landed at San Francisco and came on to New York.

"They have been living here quietly ever since."

"Haven't they heard anything more from their enemies?" asked Trim.

"Not here," Nick answered, "but about three months ago, young Parmenter took a quiet trip down to Mexico.

"He didn't let his mother or sister know what he was about for both of them were much opposed to his paying any attention to the property his father had bought in that country.

"He gave it out that he was going on a shooting trip out in the Rockies, but instead he went straight to the City of Mexico.

"He arrived in that city in the morning and looked after some business with government officials during the day.

"He made certain that his title to the land his father had bought was straight, then he returned to the hotel where he had registered, intending to put in one night there and go on to the State of Jalisco just for a little exploration.

"He didn't go!

"It was still broad daylight, mind, when he got back to his hotel and there on his chamber door was the little round tag of the Nanigos."

CHAPTER III.

THE ENEMY IN NEW YORK.

"Well," said Trim as Nick paused, "what did young Mr. Parmenter do then?"

"He went into his room," responded

Nick, "and spent about fifteen minutes in anxious thought. Then he consulted the time tables of the various railroads that enter Mexico City.

"There was a train leaving by the Central line for the Texas border, late that evening.

"The last trains for the sea coast in either direction had gone for that day.

"Parmenter went down to the hotel office and talked with the clerk about the train for Texas, ending in asking the clerk to telephone to the railroad station for a berth in a sleeper."

"Did you say," asked Trim suddenly, "that this young Mr. Parmenter is alive to-day?"

"Oh yes, very much so."

"Then he didn't take that train!"

"Certainly he didn't.

"I presume you can guess what he did and of course you have implied that his talk in the hotel office was merely for the purpose of deceiving his enemies, who he believed were watching his every movement.

"He made apparent preparations for leaving the city by that train which would keep him twenty-four hours or more within the limits of Mexico.

"He knew perfectly well that a good many things could happen in a journey of that length, especially when the intended victim of murder has to pass a good deal of the time in a sleeping car.

"Having had his baggage sent from the hotel to the station of the Mexican Central Railroad, he quietly went to the headquarters of the line that runs between Mexico City and Vera Cruz and hired a locomotive to make a special trip for him.

"It took money, but fortunately Parmenter had plenty and an hour or so before the train left the Central station for Texas, Parmenter was speeding southward in the cab of an express engine.

"He arrived at Vera Cruz early the next morning in ample time to take the returning boat for New York.

"Since then he has not been to Mexico for he felt that as long as his mother and sister needed his protection he had no right to risk his life.

"He had proven, you see, that the Nanigos do carry their vengeance to other members of a family and that they had not forgotten him.

"Well, about a month ago, Parmenter's mother died and as that event broke up their home, the sister went to live with relatives elsewhere.

"Young Parmenter is therefore left without any especial responsibilities and now he wants to try Mexico once more in order to see if he can't make something out of his property there.

"It's perfectly natural. He's a fellow of spirit and I think he would like to take the risk of another journey to that county even if there wasn't a dollar involved."

"I suppose," remarked Trim, "that he would just like to do up the ruffians that are standing in his way and that murdered his father?"

"That's about it, but in any case it offers a rather neat job for one of us and I thought you'd like to tackle it."

"Of course I would. I suppose that Parmenter has been to see you about it?"

"Yes," Nick answered, "it was from him that I heard the story that I've told you. Now——

"Ah! What is it?"

This question was addressed to a servant who entered at that moment with a card.

"It's Parmenter himself!" said Nick after looking at the card.

"Show him in."

A moment later a medium-sized young man entered the room and bowed to Nick.

"Good-morning, Mr. Parmenter," the detective said.

"I want to present you to my grandson, Trimble, who is as good a detective as there is in the business and who will take hold of your case."

"Glad to see you," said Parmenter, shaking hands with Trim.

"Anything that Nick Carter says goes with me and if he says that you're the one to help me in Mexico, I believe him.

"For that matter," Parmenter continued with a nervous laugh, "I'm not sure but what I need a good deal of assistance and protection right here in New York!"

Both detectives looked at him inquiringly and presently Nick asked:

"What has happened, Mr. Parmenter?"

"It may be nothing more than an ordinary street scuffle," he answered, "but you know, after what I've been through I'm inclined to suspect trouble in everything that happens.

"I went to a theatre last evening and stayed until the play was over.

"The house was crowded and the spectators therefore were some time in getting out.

"I was in the thick of the crowd, but I didn't hurry for I had a friend with me and we were talking about the play.

"We had got well out upon the sidewalk when we were disturbed by a row of some kind almost beside us.

"It looked as if two or three men, who had been standing in a doorway or close to the building, had got into a quarrel, for they were brandishing their arms, giving a lot of loud talk to each other and jostling about considerably.

"The people nearest to them shrank away at once with the result that before we were fully aware of what was happening, my companion and I were close beside the fighters.

"I didn't feel the least alarm and at the moment it did not occur to me that this scrap in the streets of New York had anything to do with me.

"Perhaps it hadn't but wait until I tell it all.

"Of course we tried to get out of the way for the thing was disagreeable and we didn't want to get mixed up in it.

"It wasn't possible however to get away from the fighters without crowding and pushing several ladies who were in the crowd that had come out of the theatre, so we tried to hasten forward, but the fighters were taking the same direction and in an instant we were in the thick of them.

"We both put up our hands to push them aside.

"I can't tell you clearly just how it happened, but it seemed for an instant as if the three fighters had united to do up my companion and myself.

"I know that for the space of a half second we were surrounded by the three and that one of their blows glanced across my cheek.

"This angered me and I struck out with all my might at the fellow in front of me.

"I knocked him over and the force of my blow carried me across his fallen body.

"As I went stumbling along I was half conscious of a light blow on my body under my left arm.

"I paid no attention to it but as soon as I got my balance I turned about just in time to see my companion knocking down another of the three.

"By this time the sidewallk was pretty well cleared, for the theatre people had hastily fled into the street.

"A policeman was pushing his way through the crowd, but before he could get there the three ruffians had picked themselves up and run.

"We were glad enough to be free from them and so made no effort to stop them.

"I wish we had although the policeman gave us no trouble about it.

"It was easy enough to explain to him that we had got mixed up in the affair accidentally.

"He chased the fellows a block or so but didn't catch them."

"How do you know he didn't?" asked Nick.

"Because I inquired a couple of hours later at the station house."

"What led you to make that inquiry?"

"I was coming to that, Mr. Carter.

"My friend and I went on to Delmonico's and had a supper.

"We sat for a long time at the table talking about one thing and another.

"When we got up at last the waiter brought our overcoats.

"He held up mine first and I put out my arms to receive it.

"'Hello!' my friend exclaimed. 'What's the matter with your coat?'

"'Nothing that I know of,' said I, putting my arms down.

"'Yes there is,' he exclaimed, 'hold up your left arm again.'

"I did so and—well, I'm wearing the same coat now.

"I thought you'd best see it for yourself and so I put it on this morning."

With this Parmenter arose and laid aside his overcoat; then he turned so that the detective could see the left side of his under coat.

There was a slit in the cloth fully a foot long beginning under the left arm-pit.

Trim instantly brought a microscope to bear upon the slit.

"That isn't a tear," he remarked, "that's a clean cut. It must have been made with a very sharp knife."

Parmenter nodded.

"I was afraid so," he said.

"It didn't look to me as if that could have been torn by a man's finger in striking at me.

"See this!"

He opened the coat and showed a kind of scratch along his vest directly under the cut in the coat.

"Yes," said Trim, "you don't need to tell me anything about it.

"The man struck for your heart just at the moment you aimed your blow at the man you knocked down.

"His knife tore open your coat, but as you were lunging forward from the force of your own blow, the blade got no further than the edge of your vest.

"You had a narrow escape!"

"Well, that was the way it seemed to me," responded Parmenter quietly, "and after we had thought it over it struck me that possibly the Nanigos had some of their men here in New York.

"Then I wished I had chased the ruffians up and in the hope that the policeman had captured them, we went to the Thirtieth Street Station to inquire.

"They had got away however and as the policeman on that post regarded the affair as an ordinary street brawl, no further effort had been made to capture them."

"Did you explain yourself to the sergeant?" asked Trim.

"No. That is, I said nothing about suspecting that these fellows were conspirators who had determined to kill me.

"I thought as I'd put that matter in charge of Mr. Carter, it was just as well to say nothing to the regular police about it."

"That was right," said Nick.

"Have you ever seen this little warning in the shape of a tag on your door in New York?" asked Trim.

"No," was the reply, "I never had any reason to suspect that I was followed to this city until the event of last night."

Trim and Nick looked at each other and the young detective asked:

"What do you think of it?"

"I'd rather hear what you think, Trim," Nick responded.

"Well then," said Trim, "of course it's perfectly clear that these fellows won't rest until they've put an end to Mr. Parmenter."

"Huh!" exclaimed Parmenter desperately. "I'll give them a long chase then.

"I don't propose to be struck down right here in New York by a gang of Mexican criminals!"

"You won't be!" responded Trim.

"I was going to add that after last night's failure I think you will be perfectly safe in New York for quite a while.

"For that reason and for the reason that Nanigos would not dare to operate as boldly here as they would in Mexico, I believe in leaving New York at once and meeting them on their own ground."

As he said this the young detective looked again at Nick.

The latter nodded approvingly.

"That's right," he said. "If you're going into this thing at all it's best to go in in such a way that you can have it out with the villains at once.

"You might work a week or two here and perhaps succeed in capturing the three who were concerned in the attack upon Mr. Parmenter last night, but if you lock them up, what then?"

"What then?" interrupted Trim, "why three or half a dozen others would take their places."

"Exactly!

"Whereas if you go straight to Mexico and strike at the head of the organization you'll stand your only chance of breaking them up so that Mr. Parmenter may look after his business interests without fear."

"And that's what we will do!" said Trim reaching for a railway and steamship guide.

He turned over the pages for a moment and then said:

"There's a boat sailing for Vera Cruz this afternoon. Let's take it."

"I'm agreed," answered Parmenter, "but I'm pretty sure that my departure

for Mexico will be known to the enemy, and if some of them don't go along on the boat with us they'll get word to Vera Cruz so that I'll be seen when I land."

"No matter," Trim answered, "leave that to me.

"I've no fear but that we can outwit them if they should attempt to travel on the same boat with us, and by the time we get to Mexico I'll have a plan for fooling them.

"In fact I've got a plan now!"

"I'm glad to hear it!" exclaimed Parmenter. "What'll it be?"

"Will you wait here a few moments?" Trim responded without answering the question.

"There is an old man who helps us occasionally in matters of this kind whom I want to speak to a moment.

"I'll send him to you and if you will follow his directions until you get on board the boat it will save me some trouble."

"All right I'll do that."

"Where are you staying?" asked Trim.

"I have rooms in Twenty-eighth Street."

"Do you need to go there before taking the boat?"

"It isn't absolutely necessary. I could purchase whatever I need for traveling at a store and go on board within a couple of hours if you wish."

"That will be the best way then. You'll find me on board."

Trim then shook hands with Nick and said good-by and with a nod to Parmenter, left the room.

Nick and his young client talked about various matters for a few minutes until the door opened and a man who wore a heavy white beard and green spectacles, came in.

"Young Mr. Trimble told me," the old fellow said, "that I would find a Mr. Parmenter here?"

"This is the gentleman," said Nick, indicating young Parmenter.

"Then will you come with me, sir?" asked the old man.

Parmenter promptly arose, said good-day to Nick, and followed the old man into the hallway.

There, Parmenter started toward the front door.

"No," said the old man, touching him upon the arm, "come this way."

Parmenter followed with some wondering, for the old man led him down the stairs into the basement and from there to a covered passage across the back yard of the house.

They presently entered the basement of another house, went up the stairs and so out of its front door.

This other house was also owned by Nick Carter and the passage between the two was frequently used in order to throw criminals off the track.

The residence of the great detective was of course well known and it often happened that criminals shadowed it in the hope of learning something about the movements of the detectives in their headquarters.

In this instance it was quite probable that one or more of the Nanigos had kept young Parmenter in view and had seen him go into Nick Carter's house.

Parmenter and his old guide found a closed carriage waiting at the curb in front of the other house.

They got into this and the driver without a word of directions, drove them at once downtown and so to the dock of the Ward Line Steamship Company.

The old man didn't stop to pay the driver who promptly turned about and drove away as soon as his passengers had alighted.

Parmenter was then led by the old man on board the vessel and conducted to the main saloon.

"I don't see young Mr. Carter anywhere," remarked Parmenter looking around.

"He'll be here soon," responded the old man in a cracked voice.

"Just wait a few minutes until I look after the tickets."

The old man went out and returned shortly with tickets for Vera Cruz and the key to a stateroom.

He led the way to it and when they were once inside, locked the door.

In doing so he turned his back for an instant upon Parmenter and when he faced about again, the white beard and hair and green spectacles had gone and

instead of an old man, Parmenter saw Trim standing with a smile upon his face before him.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ENEMY ON BOARD.

"Good gracious! Mr. Carter," began Parmenter in great surprise when Trim interrupted him.

"Let's drop formality," he said.

"We're not very far from the same age and at that you're older than I am, so as we're in this thing together suppose you call me plain Trim. I shall like it better."

"All right then, Trim, as long as I'm able to recognize you, I'll speak as if we had been chums for years, but——"

"I know what you want to ask and I'm ready to explain.

"This disguise that I have just taken off is part of a plan that I formed while you were at Nick Carter's house.

"I don't think there is any doubt that you were attacked by Nanigos last night, and in that case there is no doubt that you were shadowed by them to Nick's house.

"They may be watching for you still at the door which you entered.

"I dont much care whether they are or not as long as we have got to the boat without interruption.

"Now I might say that the sooner they find us the better, for at this time, Trim the detective disappears, and young Mr. Parmenter becomes somebody else."

"I don't understand!" said Parmenter in amazement.

"I can see how you might form a plan at Nick Carter's house and disguise yourself to conduct me out of the place by a back way, but there was a cab all waiting for us——"

"We're always prepared for such an event," interrupted Trim.

"Nick's stable is only a little distance from his house and there's telephone connection.

"A horse and carriage are always ready for instant use.

"When I left the library to put on my disguise, I telephoned for the carriage and also for the driver.

"The latter person was one of our own crowd. Perhaps you've heard of him; his name is Patsy."

"Oh!" exclaimed Parmenter with his eyes brightening, "then it was Patsy who drove us down to the dock?"

"Exactly, and at this minute I expect that Patsy is looking around in the neighborhood of Nick Carter's house to find some trace of the Nanigos.

"He will report to me before the boat sails."

"That looks like business, Trim, but what did you mean about disappearing?"

"Just this. When I leave this stateroom I shall leave it as young Mr. Parmenter, and by the way, what is your first name?"

"Warren."

"Oh yes! so Nick said. Very well. I will now proceed to become Warren Parmenter.

"Just sit on that bunk there so that the light will fall on your face and be patient while I do some careful work."

Trim already had his make-up materials in his hand and standing before the stateroom mirror, he began to work upon his face.

"The fact that you're a young man," he remarked as he compared the color he was putting on with Parmenter's complexion, "makes this job all the harder.

"If you were sixty years old now with gray hair and wrinkles, I shouldn't have any trouble."

"You seem to be getting on very well."

"Oh I shall fetch it, never fear; the only question is what to do with you?"

"Why not turn me into the old man that you yourself represented on the way down?"

"Because, as you're not accustomed to disguises that kind of disguise would bother you.

"You wouldn't be able to eat or drink with any comfort and very likely you would give yourself away before the day was over.

"But there's another reason and a more important one."

"What is that?"

"In every step we take in a matter of this kind we have to suppose that the enemy is watching us.

"It may be that we have got to the boat without being seen by any of the

Nanigos, but it is safer to suppose that every step we have taken has been seen.

"Now I'll ask you, supposing that to be the case what have your enemies seen?"

"Well," answered Parmenter thoughtfully, "they have seen me come on board accompanied by an old man with a white beard and green spectacles."

"Yes; and who will they suppose that old man to be?"

"Why, Nick Carter or one of his men."

"Exactly, and the worst thing we could do would be to let them suppose that Nick Carter or one of his men had sailed to Mexico with you.

"Therefore, the old man with the white beard and green spectacles must leave this boat before she sails."

"How will you manage that?"

"I will show you later.

"Meantime you must remember that a good many persons are getting on and off the boat.

"There will be more going up and down the gangplank between now and the time of sailing.

"Therefore if I disguise you as an ordinary-looking man, nobody will know the difference.

"You'll pass unsuspected among those who idle about the deck as the steamer leaves the dock."

"But why are you disguising yourself to represent me?"

"Because I want to bring all your trouble upon my own shoulders."

"You'll have a big load, Trim."

"I suppose so, but that's what you engaged a detective for, wasn't it?"

"I didn't have any intention of shirking danger."

"Oh no, of course not, but you want to be able to look after your gold mine down in that Mexican mountain and to do that, this gang of Nanigos has got to be broken up, isn't that the case?"

"Yes."

"Well then, the detective has decided to carry the war right into the camp of the enemy and to do that he's got to be mistaken by the enemy as the man that they are hunting for.

"If you were to go down to Mexico looking like yourself, I should have all I could do to take care of you and before long, the sharp-eyed Nanigos would see that you were under guard.

"Therefore the best and quickest way is for me to draw their fire, so to speak, and the sooner I shall do it the better I shall like it."

"I hate to feel that I'm going to be kept out of the fight!"

"Oh you won't be, there'll be plenty of chance for you to take a hand in the affair before we get through with it.

"Now then, how do I look?"

Trim turned from the mirror and faced his companion.

"It's an amazing likeness," said Parmenter, "and if it wasn't for your clothing——"

"We might as well attend to that right away," interrupted Trim.

"Ah, there's a knock at the door. Let's see if it is what I expect."

"You don't think Patsy will come so soon as this, do you?"

"No."

Trim opened the door and found a porter there with a large traveling bag in his hand.

"Is this Mr. Parmenter's room?" asked the porter.

"Yes," Trim replied, "I am Mr. Parmenter."

"Then I suppose this belongs to you, sah?"

"It does. You needn't mind bringing it in. I'll take it."

"Thankee, sah."

The porter went away with a liberal tip in his hand and Trim took the traveling bag into the stateroom.

He opened it and showed that it was filled with wearing apparel.

"I told Patsy to fit me out," he remarked as he pulled the garments out, "and he's done well.

"Here's enough to last both of us for a long time and all new.

"If the clothes don't fit exactly we'll have to make the best of it."

"You think of everything, don't you?" exclaimed Parmenter admiringly.

"I have to," responded Trim.

"Now of course I shall have to get into your clothes, for if anybody is watching I want them to make no mistake about me.

"You get into one of these suits that

Patsy has sent and then I'll see about making up your face."

For the next few minutes the young men were busy in changing clothes.

When Trim had put Parmenter's suit on his likeness to that young man was even more striking than before.

Parmenter now wore an ordinary business suit which fitted him well enough, but which was very different in cut from the one he had been wearing.

"I think," said Trim thoughtfully, "that a short mustache won't trouble you in eating and drinking and a little touch of side whiskers with a pair of eye-glasses made of plain window glass will just about conceal you, so here goes."

Parmenter's disguise was soon made for as there was no attempt to copy anybody's appearance, Trim didn't have to use extra care in it.

When the make-up had been completed, Trim packed his own suit into the traveling bag, put away his make-up materials and declared that he was ready for the next step.

"And what will that be?" asked Parmenter.

"The next thing will be to send Nick Carter's gray-bearded assistant off the boat," was the reply.

"I'd like to see that done!" suggested Parmenter.

"You may, but you'd better see it from the deck.

"You can go out now with perfect safety. The Nanigos will never suspect——"

"Oh well," interrupted Parmenter lightly, "it isn't at all probable that the Nanigos have got on to my presence here.

"You must have fooled them by leaving Nick Carter's house by the back way."

"Perhaps so, but it doesn't matter much anyway, for the sooner we get at them now, the better I shall like it.

"It will be best for you to go out and mingle with the other passengers on deck until the boat leaves.

"Watch the gangplank if you want to see the white-bearded man depart.

"Before you go I'll take a look into the cabin to see that everything is all right."

The stateroom they occupied opened from a short passage that led from the main saloon.

By standing in the doorway of his stateroom, Trim could see almost the entire saloon and when he opened the door he observed that there was nobody in the saloon at the moment excepting a couple of stewards at the further end.

He looked out, leaning one hand carelessly against the door, and said to his companion:

"Now, Parmenter, slip out and instead of going through the cabin turn to the end of this passage where you will find another passage leading out.

"Go through that to the deck and then go around to the dock side where probably you will find groups of passengers near the rail.

"Mix in with any group and keep quiet until the boat leaves."

Parmenter did as directed and as soon as he had disappeared, Trim removed his hand from the door, looking intently at the spot that his hand had covered.

There was the fatal label of the Nanigos. A little circular piece of paper with a rough drawing of two knives crossed upon it.

The detective drew a long breath as he looked at it.

"I am afraid it would have made Parmenter nervous," he said to himself, "if I had let him see this tag which has been stuck on there since we entered this stateroom.

"The first thing to do will be to scrape it off."

Accordingly he produced his pocket knife and by careful work managed to get the tag off without tearing it.

It proved to be gummed like a postage stamp, a point that set the detective to thinking and that proved to be useful to him before many minutes had passed.

When he had taken off the tag he put it carefully in his pocket and rubbed the spot where it had been stuck with a damp towel so as to clear away any sign that it had been there.

"One thing is sure from this," he thought as he worked, "the Nanigos may have shadowed Parmenter to Nick Carter's house.

"Probably they did but if so we probably gave them a slip there.

"They didn't find out that he had come

to this steamer by following him from Nick Carter's, not at all.

"They reckoned on the possibility of his starting for Mexico at some time and had one of their men down here to watch this boat.

"It would be a good bet that they have watched every Ward line boat for months.

"All right, Mr. Nanigo, your threatening label gives me more pleasure than I had expected to enjoy to-day."

CHAPTER V.

BETRAYED BY THE LABEL.

When Trim had rubbed away all signs of the label he closed the door upon himself, locked it and sat down to wait.

About a quarter of an hour passed when there was a light knock that he recognized.

He threw it open at once and in the porter who stood there he recognized his detective partner, Patsy.

"Come in in a hurry!" exclaimed Trim under his breath.

Patsy complied and Trim again closed and locked the door.

"Has the circus begun so soon, Trim?" asked Patsy.

"Yes. This label was stuck on the outside of the stateroom door within a few minutes after Parmenter and I came in here."

"Where's Parmenter now?" Patsy asked as he examined the label.

"He's on deck, disguised of course, watching the scene with the other passengers."

"You're going to have a lively time," Patsy remarked as he handed the label back.

"I expect so; what have you found?"

"Oh, just what we expected. There was a dark-complexioned ruffian loafing around Nick Carter's house. Of course it was one of the Nanigos."

"Did he tumble to you?"

"I shouldn't wonder. I gave him every chance to."

"That was right. As long as we have made a start I'd like to have them understand that Parmenter is going to Mexico and that he has got the assistance of one of Carter's men.

"Now the next thing will be to convince them that Carter's men are not going by the same boat.

"Do you catch on, Patsy?"

"Of course!

"Nobody will miss me in my disguise as a porter, but they will be on the lookout for the white-bearded man, is that it?"

"That's it, exactly!" Trim responded.

"Well then where's the disguise?"

Trim opened the traveling bag where was not only his former suit of clothing, but the white wig and beard and green spectacles that he had worn on the way from Nick Carter's house.

"Help yourself," he said. "How soon does the boat start?"

"In about ten minutes."

Patsy was already beginning to lay aside the disguise of a porter and put on that of the white-haired assistant.

Meantime young Parmenter had joined a group of men on the upper deck who were watching the passengers come on board.

They leaned against the rail almost over the gangplank, and from where they stood they could see the greater part of the dock and of the main deck below them.

Parmenter saw Patsy come on board in the disguise of a porter, but didn't recognize him.

At the same moment however he did recognize a man on the dock whose presence gave him an uncomfortable start.

It was one of the three men who had been quarreling upon the the street the night before.

This man stood near the bottom of the gangplank watching the boat.

"I wish I could tell Trim about him," thought Parmenter, "but if I should go back to the stateroom I might be interfering with some plan that he has.

"I suppose there's no doubt that he had me come on deck for a certain purpose, so I suppose I'd better stay where I am.

"At the same time I wish there was some way——"

At this moment a steward came along the deck beating a big gong and shouting:

"All ashore who are not going."

Parmenter took a card from his pocket and wrote these words on it.

"One of the men I saw last night is at the foot of the gangplank."

There were two or three envelopes in his pocket addressed to himself.

One of these had been opened by ripping up the flap. A little mucilage had been left untouched and by moistening this, Parmenter was able to make the envelope look as if it were properly sealed.

He thrust the card into it, pressed the flap down and approached the steward with the gong.

"Here, Charley," he said, "you're going down to the lower deck aren't you?"

"Yes, sah, directly," answered the steward. "All ashore who are not going."

"Give this to the gentleman in Room 23."

The steward was about to say that he could not interrupt his work to do an errand, but when he felt the silver dollar that Parmenter pressed into his hand, the expression on his dark face changed.

"Yes, sah," he exclaimed, "directly, sah. All ashore who are not going."

He hurried away pounding the gong for all he was worth, and Parmenter returned to his place by the rail.

The man whom he had recognized was still at the bottom of the plank.

Late comers were now hurrying on board and stewards and porters were going up and down the plank carrying baggage from the dock to the steamer.

It was a lively scene.

The man who stood near the bottom of the plank was eying everybody who passed evidently on the lookout for some special person and just as evidently determined not to let that person escape him.

A few minutes passed and then the steward with the gong came back, making another round with his cry of warning.

As he passed the group where Parmenter stood he grinned broadly and whispered.

"Mr. Parmenter done got your note, sah."

Parmenter was greatly relieved.

He leaned again over the rail expecting to see Trim rush down the gangplank and arrest the dark man who was standing there.

It seemed to Parmenter as if this could be done without difficulty before the boat started, for he himself could easily point out the man to the detective.

As he leaned over the rail he was not surprised therefore to see the image of himself come from the saloon and join the little crowd that stood near the upper end of the gangplank.

He knew of course that this was Trim.

Following close behind him was an exact image of the old man who had guided him from Nick Carter's house.

"Now then," thought Parmenter, "who in the world is that? I wonder if Trim had hired some deck hand to dress up like that so as to deceive the Nanigos by leaving the ship?

"Anyhow there's no doubt that Trim was right in making his plan on the supposition that the Nanigos would watch this ship.

"But why doesn't he go down the plank and catch that fellow there?"

Parmenter wanted very much to speak to Trim who stood less than a dozen feet below him.

He was sensible enough to refrain from this but he grew impatient with wonderment and anxiety as he saw Trim conversing with the white-bearded man.

Trim and his companion even walked up and down the deck for a few paces and Parmenter could see that the dark-faced man at the bottom of the gangplank observed them.

"That fellow," thought Parmenter in an agony of excitement, "is on to the situation with the exception that he supposes Trim to be me.

"Why doesn't Trim do something?"

The last call of all ashore sounded and preparations were made to pull the gangplank to the dock.

Trim and his white-bearded companion shook hands and the latter started down the plank while Trim leaned against the rail near by watching him.

Parmenter saw the white-bearded man walk down the plank, step upon the dock and pass the watching Nanigo.

He had hardly got by when suddenly the Nanigo gave a cat-like spring and Parmenter saw the flash of a knife blade in his hand.

Parmenter would have shouted a cry of warning but his voice choked and besides that, before he could have uttered a sound he saw that his warning would have been unnecessary.

The white-bearded man sprang about the instant he had passed the Nanigo, threw up one arm and warded off the blow that was aimed at him while with his other hand he gave the fellow a terrific smash between the eyes.

There was a brief scuffle while great excitement and confusion reigned on the dock.

The old man easily overpowered the Nanigo and it was but a few seconds after the attack was made when the dark-complexioned ruffian was lying on the dock with iron bracelets upon his wrists.

The white beard had not been so much as disturbed in the struggle and the man who wore it stood over his prisoner waving his hand cheerfully to those who were watching him from the steamer.

It was seen by the people on the dock that he was an officer because of his quick display of handcuffs.

Accordingly there were plenty there who offered to help him, but he shook his head and lifted his prisoner to his feet.

The whole thing was over so quickly that there had been hardly any interruption in the preparations for taking in the plank.

This work was now resumed and Parmenter heard the command given to haul away.

Meantime, Trim had remained motionless at the rail of the deck just below where Parmenter was standing.

Like other passengers he seemed to be curiously interested in the struggle that had taken place.

Parmenter, watching the struggle had lost sight of Trim for the moment.

As soon as the struggle was over, he turned his attention again to Trim and saw the latter turn suddenly from the rail and make a violent attack upon a quiet-looking man who stood close beside him.

The passengers who had been excited by the struggle on the dock now scattered in terror.

Naturally enough they could not understand what all this fighting was about.

No one had seen the quiet man do anything to provoke Trim.

Nevertheless the latter caught the man by the throat and gave him a blow between the eyes that doubtless made him see a million stars.

Two officers of the steamer rushed up to interfere.

"It's all right," said Trim who had quickly knocked all possible fight out of his man, "I hit this fellow in self-defense and I'll prove it soon enough if you give me the chance."

"What has he done to you?" demanded the first officer savagely.

"Tried to kill me, that's all," Trim responded indifferently.

He had pushed his man against the deck house and held him there with a knee pressed against his legs and with one hand still upon the fellow's throat.

The man whom he had attacked was trying with one hand to release Trim's grip while the other was doubled behind his back.

"See here!" Trim added, quickly flinging the man around letting go his throat and seizing his clinched fist.

The man, half stunned by the blow Trim had given him, tried feebly to break away, but Trim caught his fist with both hands and with a wrench tore his fingers apart.

A small knife dropped to the deck.

"It isn't much of a weapon, is it?" remarked Trim putting his feet upon it.

"It wouldn't cut very deep but a scratch with that blade would do the business.

"Pick it up carefully and let the ship's doctor examine it for poison."

"But how did you know he meant it for you?" asked the first officer amazed and doubtful.

"Ask him," retorted Trim.

"What have you got to say?" demanded the officer.

Trim's prisoner muttered something under his breath that nobody understood.

Other officers of the ship gathered about while the passengers stood looking on at a distance.

The steamer was now clear of the dock.

"The best way out of this," said Trim quietly, "is to arrest us both.

"Take us before the captain and I'll show you what's the matter."

This seemed to be the only course possible and the first officer accordingly took it.

He picked the knife up carefully by the handle and led the way to the captain's room.

Trim and his prisoner followed, each guarded by two men.

At that time the captain was on the bridge directing the course of the steamer as it picked its way along the crowded river.

Word of what had happened was taken to him and the captain immediately left the ship in command of a pilot and came down to his room.

Trim's prisoner had not uttered a word since he had been taken there.

"What is all this?" demanded the captain.

"Simply this," responded Trim promptly, "my name is Warren Parmenter.

"I don't know this man's name but I do know that he is a member of the Nanigos' society."

"It's a lie!" exclaimed the prisoner starting up.

"Sit down!" commanded the captain sternly pushing the man into the chair.

"Nanigos, hey? We have never had one of those reptiles on board and I hope we haven't now!"

"It's a lie I tell you!" insisted the prisoner.

"He attacked me without cause. I drew my knife in self-defense."

"That's where the lie comes in," remarked Trim.

"I was expecting the attack and so didn't wait for the blow to be made.

"In fact I didn't know that this was the man who was going to attack me until that scuffle occurred on the dock."

"How did you know it then?" asked the captain.

"I heard him shout to the dark-looking man who made the assault on the dock."

"A good man people shouted," remarked the first officer.

"Yes," Trim admitted, "but he used a word that I understood and I knew it was meant for his accomplice."

"What was that word?" asked the captain.

"Ebion."

At the sound of this word the prisone started and his face became pale.

"It is the name of one of the Nanigo groups," continued Trim quietly, "and now I know that both of these men belong to it.

"It informed me that the man who used it would immediately attack me, so as I had reason to suspect that he would use a poisoned knife, I didn't wait for him to scratch me."

"It's all a lie!" muttered the prisoner.

"Pretty serious business," remarked the captain. "If we have a Nanigo on board we certainly want to know it."

"Have the doctor examine this knife and see whether the blade is poisoned!"

"But even if that should prove to be the case, Mr. Parmenter, it doesn't follow that this man is one of the Nanigos."

"I know that," returned Trim, "there is other evidence of that matter."

"What evidence have you got?"

"Not much of anything, but you'll find plenty of it about him. Will you search him?"

"Certainly," the captain replied and he glanced significantly at the under officers.

As they obeyed and laid hands upon the prisoner, the latter began to struggle.

He was promptly subdued however and one article after another was taken from his pockets.

Among them was a card case.

"Hold on," said Trim as this was laid upon the captain's desk. "I'll give my guess that the evidence is in that card case.

"Do you see this?"

So saying Trim produced the label that he had taken from his stateroom door.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the captain.

"I've heard of that article though I never saw one before. That's the genuine sign of the Nanigos, isn't it?"

"That's what I take it to be," Trim responded, "and if I'm not mistaken you'll find a supply of them in that man's card case."

The case was opened and sure enough two dozen or more of the little labels, a

gummed and ready for use were taken out.

That settled the matter in the captain's mind and the question then was, what to do about it.

"I can't very well put back to port to land this man," the captain said, "and besides, Mr. Parmenter, I suppose that you wouldn't want to get off the boat to give evidence against him?"

"No," replied Trim, "I want to go on to Mexico, but if you lock the man up you can turn him over to the authorities in Vera Cruz, where either the Mexican Government will take care of him or the American consul will see to his being shipped back to New York."

"Yes," said the captain, "that is what will have to be done.

"It is probably a case for the Mexican authorities anyway so we will put him in the brig and keep him there until we get to Vera Cruz.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Parmenter, upon your good sense in tackling this fellow before he had a chance at you."

Before the day was over the ship's doctor examined the Nanigo's knife and reported that its blade was smeared with a deadly poison.

CHAPTER VI.

DRAWING THEIR FIRE.

Trim saw his prisoner safely locked in the brig, as the ship's prison was called and then hastened to find the real Parmenter.

This young man after going over the last of the decks in search of Trim had returned to the stateroom.

"I'm thundering glad to see you," he cried as Trim entered. "I saw pretty much all that happened, but couldn't make anything of it."

"Well," responded Trim cheerily, "all is serene.

"Patsy has probably taken his man to police headquarters by this time and my man is where he can't do us any more damage during the rest of the trip."

"Was it Patsy then who went down the gangplank in the old man's disguise?"

"It was nobody else.

"We were quite prepared for some kind of trouble but your note of warning was a good thing nevertheless.

"These Nanigos are in a desperate frame of mind or they wouldn't make these attacks in broad daylight. I see a reason for it."

"What is it?" asked Parmenter, "for it can't be that their hostility to me explains it all?"

"No it doesn't.

"They've got it in for you sure enough but the fact that you took the matter to Nick Carter has made them ready to make any sacrifice so as to be sure of getting him out of the way.

"You see these ruffians don't realize that there's more than one Carter.

"The fellow that attacked Patsy was ready to risk imprisonment, if not execution for the sake of ridding the society of a tremendous enemy such as Nick Carter would be.

"No matter; we have made a fine start.

"We have not only disposed of the two Nanigos who tried to do us up to-day, but there isn't any doubt that we have convinced them that you're going to Mexico unaccompanied by a detective.

"The result of that will be that when we get to Mexico I can carry on my original plan of drawing their fire.

"But we'll see about that when we get there, meantime we have several days in which we can enjoy ourselves."

Trim told Parmenter all about the discovery of a label upon the stateroom door and of the exposure of the enemy in the captain's room.

It proved to be as the detective had predicted.

The voyage passed without further incident so far as Parmenter's enemies were concerned.

When they arrived at Vera Cruz, Trim's prisoner was locked up on shore and the detective had a consultation with the American consul and the Mexican authorities on the matter.

He told them confidentially who he was and urged them to hold the prisoner until he should have had time to complete his operations against the secret society of criminals.

There was no objection to this for the Mexican authorities were only too glad to encourage any effort toward ridding the country of such a dangerous gang.

It did not take long to settle this matter and when it had been arranged satisfactorily, Trim and Parmenter went on to the City of Mexico.

There was no business to detain them there, but Trim nevertheless thought it better to remain there for a day or two in order to learn whether Parmenter's presence would be discovered by the Nanigos.

The young men put up at the same hotel but they did not appear on the street together.

They acted just as if they were strangers and had become acquainted during the voyage, but who had different affairs to interest them on land.

This course was taken in order to prevent the Nanigos, if they should be on the watch, from suspecting that Parmenter and his companion had changed identities.

Trim had not long to wait before being satisfied as to what he would have to expect from the ruffians.

They arrived in the city about the middle of the afternoon and from then until evening, Trim went about taking in the sights.

In the evening he went to a theatre and it hardly needs be said that he was constantly on the lookout for attacks.

Nothing happened however and he went to bed at last feeling that perhaps it would have been just as well to go straight on to the State of Jalisco.

His room was on the second floor and its one window overlooked a quiet street.

It was a warm night and he left his window open.

He slept as calmly as if there was nothing on his mind to trouble him.

About sunrise he awakened suddenly.

He was not conscious of any noise that had disturbed him and supposed that it was simply his usual hour for waking.

He was lying with his back to the window and without any special reason for doing so, he turned over in bed and faced it.

He was just in time to see a dark evil-looking face disappear.

He saw more than that for in fact a man had already begun to climb in at the window.

Like a flash Trim's hand sought beneath his pillow, found a revolver and leveled it at the window.

The detective did not fire however for the man had disappeared before he could bring his weapon to bear.

Trim leaped from the bed and ran to the window. There was nobody in sight.

Just below his window and a little to one side of it was a door that opened upon the side street.

This door was approached by a small stoop the roof of which came up almost to the level of Trim's window.

It was clear therefore how the intruder had made his way to Trim's room.

He pulled himself up to the roof of the stoop and then reached over to the window ledge.

Another second and he would have been within the room.

Finding that he was observed, the man had simply dropped to the ground and run around the corner.

"That fellow is something of an athlete," thought Trim, "or he couldn't have done all that climbing and made that drop so successfully.

"There's nothing to do about it. I might chase him up and might possibly capture him, but he would be only one in the gang and I mustn't forget that I am playing the part of Parmenter, who wouldn't be expected to take any such course.

"It's all right. I guess I've proved what I wanted to, that is that the Nanigos have been on the watch for Parmenter.

"Let's see about the door."

Trim put on some of his clothes and then opened the door of his room.

He was somewhat surprised to find that there was no label upon it.

He thoughtfully closed the door, locked it and continued dressing.

"That fellow may have been an ordinary burglar," he reflected. "He may not have been connected with the Nanigos at all.

"These fellows always seem to fix their tag on the door of the man they intend to make their victim.

"That has not been done in this case so it may be that I have struck a wrong lead in this thing after all.

"It won't do any harm to stay another day in Mexico to make sure of it."

It was very early in the morning and Trim was in no hurry to go out.

After he had finished dressing he began a letter to his father.

It was hardly started when there came a violent knocking at the door.

"Hello," he cried, "what's wanted?"

"Senor Parmenter!" cried an excited voice.

"You must come out!

"You must let me in, you must go!

"Open the door, senor!"

The man outside was rattling the handle vigorously.

'Well," thought Trim, "here seems to be a new complication. That's the landlord's voice if I'm not mistaken and he wants several things to happen at once."

He slowly crossed the room, unlocked the door and threw it open.

It was the landlord who stood there.

"Senor Parmenter!" he gasped; "you must leave my house at once, I no can keep you here!"

"I'm in no hurry to go," returned Trim coolly; "what ails you, anyhow?"

"See zis, senor? You know what it means, hey?"

The landlord pointed excitedly to a panel of the door where Trim saw a label of the Nanigos.

"Yes, I see that," he responded quietly, "what of it?"

"You know what zat mean?" cried the landlord.

"I no can have trouble in my house, you must go!

"Your life is in danger and I no want——"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Trim, and throwing the door wide open so that the panel where the label was stuck would be in better light he examined the label with a microscope.

He felt of it and without difficulty lifted the edge with his thumb nail and tore the label off.

"Well," he said, "Mr. Landlord, if it was the little piece of paper that disturbed you, you see it isn't there now; so what's the use of making a fuss about it?"

"But it was there!" exclaimed the landlord, "and you know what it mean."

"How did you happen to find it?" demanded Trim.

"One of my servants," was the prompt reply, "saw it in passing.

"He told me and I come right up."

"Where is that servant?"

"He gone."

"Gone where?"

"Don't know, senor. He leave at once because he's much frightened."

"But the label hadn't anything to do with him?"

"Saretainly not, senor! Saretainly not! But he know zee Nanigos label and he frightened.

"He leave zis house, I no have him some more!

"You will go at once, Senor Parmenter, will you not?"

"No," responded Trim emphatically, "I won't go!

"This is a public house and if I go before my time is up you'll have to put me out by law."

"Oh, what shall I do! The Nanigos kill you sure, senor!"

"Let them kill then, but I can tell you one thing, Mr. Landlord, that you want to do if you want to avoid trouble for yourself."

"What is zat?"

"Find that servant who told you about this label and bring him to me."

With this Trim went back into his room and shut the door on the landlord's face.

The latter called out to him and would have come into the room, but Trim turned the key and told him to find the servant.

After a moment the landlord gave it up and went away.

"This is business in earnest!" thought Trim.

"The fact that I could pick that label off so easy shows that it had been stuck on but a moment before the landlord warned me.

"The probability is therefore that the servant stuck it there himself.

"Hold on, is that the probability? I'm not so sure. There's something to think about here.

"A man tries to get into my room through the open window; I scare him away and find no label on the door; a

quarter of an hour later the landlord wakes me up, or rather comes to my room to tell me that the Nanigos' warning is on the door.

"It strikes me as peculiar to say the least, that that label should make its appearance so soon after the failure of the man who tried to get in through the window.

"I guess Senor Parmenter will have to stay in Mexico another day and night to settle this, for it isn't likely that this matter will grow any clearer during daylight."

Trim was right. The matter did not grow clearer during daylight.

The landlord, seeing that his guest was not to be frightened or driven away, said nothing more on the subject except when Trim asked him what became of the missing servant.

"By all the saints, senor," he would then respond throwing up his hands and rolling his eyes dismally, "zat servant so frightened, zat he running still I think."

Trim did not tell Parmenter of the early morning affair, but advised him to be careful about betraying his real identity and declared simply that it was necessary to remain in Mexico City one more night before proceeding to the State of Jalisco.

In the evening Parmenter wanted Trim to go with him to a theatre but the detective declined.

He believed that the Nanigos would show themselves after nightfall and as he expressed it he was anxious to draw their fire as soon as possible.

When it was dark he went out for a stroll, walking idly about the streets in the vicinity of the hotel.

Some time passed before he saw anything to convince him that his movements were being watched.

What he saw then would not have been noticed by an ordinary observer.

It was simply that two men were loafing in the same spot where he had seen them a half hour before.

They were not the only ones whom he had seen twice during his ramble, but the very pains they took to look in another direction when he passed, made Trim feel that they were really spotting him.

He went on to the next corner where the street ended in an important avenue.

This was alive with carriages and pedestrians.

Trim stood there for a few moments as if he was undecided which way to turn.

During his wait he saw his landlord walking rapidly along on the other side of the avenue.

Trim followed the man with his eyes until he was lost in the crowd, then the detective turned about and slowly retraced his steps.

When he passed the spot where he had noticed the two idlers, he saw that they had gone away.

Just beyond that spot was a street crossing and then a long block of private houses.

About midway up this block was a street lamp.

After Trim had passed it he put his left hand to his face as if to rub his eye.

He held in his palm a tiny mirror which enabled him to see behind him.

He had got about a dozen paces beyond the street lamp when, in the mirror, he saw three figures dart from a doorway into the full light of the lamp and come noiselessly toward him.

They were advancing with cat-like bounds and their footfalls made no sign because they had laid aside their boots.

They were almost upon him even then and quick action was necessary if he would save his life, for he had no doubt that the daggers gleaming in their hands were poisoned as was the case with the Nanigo who had been captured on shipboard.

Instantly Trim wheeled about, held out both hands empty and palms turned upward, while out from his sleeves shot two flashes of light.

Both of the weapons concealed in his clothing spoke as if but one pistol shot were fired, but both took effect.

The foremost of the three men dropped like a log almost at Trim's feet.

The one next behind him staggered to one side and went reeling to the other side of the street where he came up against a house wall.

The other halted abruptly, dropped his

dagger to the pavement and ran back at full speed.

Trim did not send a bullet after him as he might have done easily enough, for the mechanism with which he worked his hidden revolvers was in perfect order.

He wanted to capture his man uninjured if possible, so he leaped over the body that had fallen in front of him and gave chase.

The fugitive ran like an athlete and until they reached the end of the block, kept his lead upon the detective.

There he turned quickly to one side and when Trim, a second later reached the street corner his man was not to be seen.

Trim was a little disappointed in this but he kept on running nevertheless, taking as short a cut as he could think of toward his hotel.

He arrived there about a minute later and dashing into the office vaulted over the clerk's desk and burst open the door of the landlord's private office at the back.

There, just as he had expected, he found the landlord reeking with perspiration and puffing like a steam engine.

The landlord was hurriedly putting on his boots.

At sight of Trim he dropped his boots, sprang to his feet and seized a heavy ruler from his desk with which he tried to strike the detective down.

Trim laughed quietly, caught the landlord's uplifted arm and with a quick wrench, not only turned the ruler aside but tripped the landlord and threw him heavily to the floor.

As he went down the landlord cursed savagely in Spanish and giving up all attempts to resist Trim, began to take articles out of his pockets.

The clerk and guests of the hotel who had been startled by Trim's entrance, now came crowding to the door to see what was the matter.

As they looked in they saw the detective snatch a pocketbook from the landlord's hand.

"I call you to witness," Trim cried in Spanish, "that this article was in the landlord's possession."

"He's robbing me!" cried the landlord.

"Call in a policeman," said Trim to the clerk, "and we'll see about that."

A passing policeman was promptly summoned.

In his presence, Trim opened the pocketbook and showed a quantity of Nanigo labels ready for use; then he briefly told the officer about the assault upon him in the street.

The landlord was put under arrest and sent to the station with another policeman who had come up to see what the excitement was about, while the first went back with Trim to the place where the assault had occurred.

When they arrived there they found half a dozen people on the spot looking at a little pool of blood on the sidewalk and discussing the strange event that had occurred.

Neither of the wounded Nanigos was there.

The bystanders told Trim and the policeman that they had been attracted to the spot by the sound of firing and that just before they arrived they saw three or four men assisting two others hurriedly away.

Before morning the police located the wounded men and put them under arrest as well as two or three who were suspected of having been their accomplices.

All were held to await further examination when Trim should have completed his labors.

He still maintained his character as Warren Parmenter, but when the Mexican authorities saw that he was determined to break up the Society of Nanigos, they did not hesitate to comply with his request to hold the men until he should have had time to visit Jalisco.

CHAPTER VII.

TRIM OFFERS TO BECOME A MEMBER.

It was not until two days later that Trim and Parmenter started for Jalisco.

The delay was due to Trim's desire to see whether the Nanigos would make another attack upon him in the City of Mexico.

There was no sign of them and he concluded that either he had captured all of the band who operated in the capital city, or that the others had retreated to their headquarters in the distant State.

In either case he felt that his work was

progressing well and that the end could only come when he had encountered and dispersed the ruffians in the place where Parmenter had first met them.

Although the two young men traveled by the same trains and coaches, they took pains not to seem well acquainted.

Young Parmenter was on the whole faithful to Trim's instructions, although he frequently expressed a regret that he could not take a hand in the active work.

Trim assured him that he would be called upon if it should prove to be necessary to have his assistance.

It was evening when they arrived at Manzanillo two or three days after leaving Mexico.

They put up at the same hotel though they occupied different rooms.

It was the place where the elder Parmenter had stayed previous to his murder.

The landlord recognized Trim in his disguise and promptly addressed him as Senor Parmenter.

This was satisfactory and Trim of course registered under that name.

The real Parmenter put himself down as John Johnson.

After supper Parmenter, who was tired with the long journey, went to his room for a nap.

Trim, who could never be quiet when in a new place where he expected to find lively work, went out for a stroll around the city.

As a matter of fact he did not expect to have any experience with the Nanigos that evening.

He was quite confident that on the following morning he would find a label on his bedroom door and that probably on the evening after he would have to defend himself as he had done in Mexico.

Nevertheless he was constantly on the alert for surprises and was therefore not taken unawares when, as he was walking along a quiet street lined with small one-story houses, he was met by a man on a dead run who turned aside when he saw Trim and attempted to stab the detective.

"Well! well!" exclaimed Trim laughing lightly as he caught the fellow by the wrist and threw him to the ground.

"This is a pleasant meeting. What were you trying to do, my friend?"

Trim spoke in Spanish and purposely used the dialect that he had learned in his boyhood.

He was kneeling with one knee upon the chest of the man whom he had thrown down, while he held the fellow's wrists with both his hands.

The man glared at Trim in a frightened way and muttered:

"Failed the first time."

A sudden thought occurred to the detective.

"I see," he said continuing to speak in Spanish, "it is a case of Ebion, isn't it?"

The man's eyes opened wider and after a long stare of astonishment he asked:

"Are you one of us?"

"No," Trim replied, "but I'd like to be. Perhaps you can get me admitted as a member?"

The man shook his head dismally.

"No use," he muttered, "I've failed and can do nothing."

"I'm not so sure about that," Trim responded.

"I'll take your knife if you please. Now you may get up and come with me and we'll talk it over."

Having put the fellow's knife in his pocket and drawn a revolver to show him that it would not be wise to attempt foul play, Trim stood up.

The Mexican slowly arose and looking doubtfully at Trim said:

"What are you going to do with me?"

"Talk to you, that's all," Trim answered. "Come this way."

Trim led him back the street for a short distance to an alley that he had noticed a few moments before.

This alley proved to be a driveway to some stables a little distance from the street.

There was nobody about, in fact the stables seemed to be unoccupied.

Trim sat upon a log of wood and motioned to the Mexican to take a place on another log opposite him.

"Now then," said Trim, "I can tell you just what you are trying to do.

"You were being initiated as a member of the Nanigos?"

"Yes," the man answered, "and as I have failed they will kill me!"

"No they won't; on the contrary they

will take you in and me too and we'll be members together."

"You don't understand what you're talking about!"

"Yes I do," Trim insisted.

"The Nanigos have an enemy that they are trying to put out of the way and they're having a good deal of trouble about it. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"Do you know his name?"

"Yes."

"You needn't mention it, but I'll tell you one thing further.

"Having lost some of their members recently, the Nanigos are now admitting new men in the hope that they will find somebody brave enough and shrewd enough to kill this enemy?"

"That is right."

"I thought so. Now, I'm that enemy."

"You, senor?"

"Yes. I'm Warren Parmenter."

The Mexican started excitedly to his feet but he sat down again abruptly when Trim leveled his revolver at him.

"We haven't got through talking yet," the detective remarked quietly.

"Before I get through I shall show you how you can become a member and admit me too!"

"It is impossible!"

"No it isn't. The Nanigos would like to be rich, wouldn't they?"

"That is the wish of all men."

"Exactly and that's what I'm counting on now. I have property of great value on the volcano of Colima——"

"That is well known."

"All right, but it is also known isn't it that I can't make that property useful unless I can work it?"

The Mexican nodded.

"Now, you fellows have prevented me from working it."

"Not I," returned the Mexican, "I've not been admitted as a Nanigo."

"No, but you wanted to be and you've got part way through your initiation."

"Yes, that is true."

"Well, what will they say to you when you go back to their headquarters?"

"They will ask me if I have killed my man."

"That was what they sent you out to do, was it?"

"Yes. I had sworn their oaths and drank the blood of a freshly-killed bird and was then told to go out upon the street and kill the first person I met.

"I met you. I failed and I dare not go back!"

"They will welcome you when you tell them what I offer," said Trim.

The Mexican looked at him furtively and the detective continued:

"Tell them that you met Senor Parmenter and that he escaped your blow."

"They will kill me if I say that!"

"Don't give them a chance but go right on and tell them that Parmenter will share the great wealth of his mining property with them if they will admit him as a member. Do you understand?"

The Mexican's eyes glowed greedily and Trim saw that he had touched the right spot.

These men might be wholesale murderers but they were nevertheless like other men in their desire for money.

"It's your only chance," Trim continued. "If you don't go back you know perfectly well what will happen."

The Mexican shuddered.

"Yes," he muttered, "within twenty-four hours they will make a corpse of me!"

"You'd better take that chance then, for they must know the value of my property and I shall be surprised if they don't make terms with me."

"What are the terms, senor?"

"That's a good question, my friend, and one that they have a right to ask.

"If they are willing to consider the matter tell them to send to my hotel after me and say that they are ready for a talk.

"I will then meet them alone."

"You are brave, senor!"

"Not at all.

"If they should kill me, which they won't do for they can't, they would still have no chance of getting wealth out of that mine.

"As long as they have a chance of that they won't harm me."

The Mexican thought a moment and then said:

"It is well. I see that your reasoning is good and I will go back to the city and tell them.

"Shall I say that you will be at your hotel?"

"Yes. I will wait for them there."

"Will you give me my knife?"

"No, I'll keep that to remember you by."

The Mexican looked disappointed but after a moment he shrugged his shoulders, arose and started away.

Trim watched him disappear around the corner of a building and then quickly shadowed him.

He saw the man go up the street to a building a short distance beyond the spot where the assault had taken place and enter.

It was a one-story building with a flat roof.

Its few windows were concealed by heavy shutters so that no light came from within except when the door was opened to admit the Mexican.

It appeared that the other houses in the neighborhood were unoccupied.

After waiting for a few minutes to make certain that no one was on guard near the society's headquarters, Trim hurriedly went around to the back of the building.

The windows there as in the front were heavily shuttered. No sound came from within.

He would have given a good deal at that moment for a stepladder, but as none was to be found in the shed at the back of the building he took a stick of firewood from a pile there and leaned it against the rear wall of the house.

Stepping up on this he was able to get his grip upon the roof and then it was not difficult to pull himself up.

He found, as he had expected that there was no chimney, but that a hole had been cut near one end of the roof to let out smoke when a fire was had in the room below.

He drew cautiously near this hole and could then hear a subdued murmur of voices.

He presently recognized the voice of the Mexican who had attacked him and although he could not make out much that was said he heard enough to show him that the Mexican was faithfully telling what Trim had told him to say.

The detective was tempted to make an effort to capture the gang at that moment.

He knew enough about the Society of Nanigos to be sure that all the members were present in their headquarters at this time, for in the case of an initiation of a new member, all the old members would be on hand.

A little thought convinced him that this would be a foolhardy experiment.

He would certainly be in for a fight with these desperate men, and although he was confident that he could come out of it victorious, he was not at all certain but that some of them would escape.

"The result of it would be," he reflected, "that I should simply scatter the gang and thus leave my client in as much danger as he was before he engaged me.

"Besides, if I should do the thing single-handed, some of these fellows might have friends among the police who would help them to get acquitted in case of a trial.

"The sensible thing is to bring the Mexican authorities right to this spot and let the Mexican police themselves capture the gang."

Having come to this wise conclusion, Trim descended to the ground by the way he had climbed up and hurried off to make the situation known at police headquarters.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION.

Young Parmenter dozed for a half hour or so in his room and finding that he was not able to fall sound asleep got up at length and went down to the hotel office.

There was no one there that he cared to get into conversation with, so he took a chair on the stoop and idly watched the scenes in the street.

After some time had passed he was not sure how long, his attention was attracted by the sound of his own name.

It was the landlord speaking in the office just behind him.

"Senor Parmenter'?' the landlord was saying, "he is staying at this hotel but he is not in just at present."

Young Parmenter wondered if some former acquaintance had heard of his arrival and had called to see him.

He accordingly turned in his chair and looked through the open window into the office.

He saw an ordinary-looking Mexican standing at the clerk's desk talking with the landlord.

The Mexican seemed to be disappointed.

Young Parmenter had never seen him before.

"Don't you know when he will be in?" the Mexican asked presently.

"How can I tell?" the landlord answered.

"He will probably sleep here to-night but it is still early. Will you leave your name?"

"No, I will call again."

The Mexican slowly left the office and walked up the street.

He had gone but a few paces when Parmenter, whose curiosity was greatly excited, arose and followed him.

"Pardon, senor," said Parmenter in rather bad Spanish, for although he could understand the language he was not skilful in speaking it, "were you not inquiring just now for Senor Parmenter?"

"Yes," said the man looking at him with great interest.

"They told me that you had gone out."

"I was sitting outside where the landlord could not see me," Parmenter replied before he thought how much the words meant.

Up to this time he had been very careful not to admit his real identity.

His disguise had protected him from being known by persons who had seen him before and ever since their leaving New York, Trim had invariably answered to the name of Parmenter.

The words once said however could not be taken back and Parmenter waited to see what the Mexican would say.

"I was sent for you."

"That means," thought Parmenter, "that he was sent for Trim.

"I wonder if it is something to do with the Nanigo business? I presume it is.

"Now what shall I do about it? I have given myself away and if I tell him now that I am not Parmenter, he will be suspicious and all Trim's plans will probably be upset.

"If I could keep him talking here for two or three minutes, Trim might come up and he would be clever enough to overcome my mistake."

"Well," said Parmenter aloud, "what is it you want?"

The man looked surprised and doubtful.

"You know perfectly well," he said in a low voice, "and if you are in earnest you know better than to talk with me upon the street.

"You must tell your plans in the presence of all."

"Of course! of course!" exclaimed Parmenter quickly, wondering what the plan was and feeling worse and worse at the slip of the tongue that threatened to bungle the affair hopelessly.

"Where are we to go?" he added.

"I'll show you," the man replied, "and I am told to say just one thing more.

"You are to go with me at your own risk.

"If we accept your plan all will be well; if we don't, you go away from our meeting a marked man. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Parmenter responded, wondering wildly if he understood a thing, "but is there any hurry about it?"

"Hurry!" retorted the man impatiently, "you are afraid then, or you are treacherous. Which is it?"

"Neither," responded Parmenter, fearing that he was making the matter worse with every word he said and with every moment's delay.

"Lead on!"

The Mexican promptly turned about and Parmenter went along with him.

"If I keep my eyes open," he reflected, "I may be able to tumble to this plan that Trim has evidently suggested and if I don't, why I guess I can manage to take care of myself as Trim has done.

"Anyhow I've made a blunder and I shall have to get out of it as best I can."

Not a word passed between them during their walk.

The Mexican led the way to the house to which Trim had shadowed his man and knocked in a peculiar way upon the door.

It was opened presently and both were admitted.

Parmenter found himself in a room that took up the whole interior of the house.

About twenty men were there seated on rude benches along the walls.

One, who seemed to be the leader, was in a chair at the further end of the room.

The place was dimly lighted by a few candles set in sockets in the wall.

There was a moment of deathly silence after they entered and then the voice of the leader demanded sternly:

"What is this! Who have you brought here?"

"Senor Parmenter," responded the young man's guide.

"You fool!" cried the leader harshly, "that is not Parmenter!"

"He said——" began the guide when the leader interurpted.

"Who are you, senor?"

"I am Warren Parmenter."

This simple statement was followed by a general exclamation of astonishment.

The leader stamped his foot for silence.

"There is something wrong here," he said, "you speak with a bad accent and we were told that you used Spanish perfectly and that you even understood some of our dialect!"

"Great chief," said a voice at one side, "may I speak?"

The leader nodded and a man stood forth from among his companions.

Parmenter instantly recognized him as one of the three ruffians who had been concerned in the attack upon him in New York.

One of them having been captured by Patsy and another by Trim, it seemed that this third must have escaped from New York and got to Mexico ahead of him.

"If any man here should know Warren Parmenter, "this man said, "I am certainly that man for I saw him in New York many times.

"I tell you, great chief, that this is not he."

This announcement was received in terrible silence.

"Come forth, Jose!" commanded the leader sternly after a moment.

Another man stepped forward.

Parmenter did not know it, but this was the one with whom Trim had had his recent adventure.

"What do you say, Jose?" asked the leader. "Is this the man who told you about the gilt-edged plan?"

"No, great chief," faltered Jose, "I never saw this man——"

"It is enough!" interrupted the leader. "Jose is a traitor! He was afraid to kill his man and brought us this fairy tale to save his own carcass.

"Jose must die! This stranger, whoever he is, having been admitted to our rooms must die also!

"Let it be done quickly!"

Several men advanced upon Parmenter and Jose at once.

Parmenter drew his revolver meaning to sell his life as dearly as possible, but before he could use it it had been snatched from his hands.

He was pushed to one end of the room and he found himself wholly powerless to resist the overwhelming force against him.

His hands were tied behind his back and his feet were bound together.

Jose was treated in the same fashion.

Both were then leaned against the rear wall a few feet apart.

The entire company of Navajos then withdrew to the other end of the room and unsheathed their knives.

It was evident that they were waiting the signal of their leader to carve their two victims to pieces.

"There's a mistake here!" shouted Parmenter desperately. "It will be the worse for you if you do not listen to me for I am Warren Parmenter, as I said——"

He was interrupted by the leader who began to count.

"One—two—three——"

With each number the scoundrels at the further end of the room became more excited.

Their bodies quivered with anxiety to rush forward and finish their victims.

Parmenter's heart turned sick as he saw the gleam of their daggers in the candle light.

The leader counted seven and then uttered the strange word "Hiion!"

Across the room they started with a rush.

The noise they made drowned a hoarse cry that came from outside and drowned a furious battering upon the front door.

Even if he could have heard that, Parmenter would have known that the assistance was coming too late for the work of murder would be done before an entrance could be forced.

He closed his eyes as the line of savage men approached him; then he felt a little rush of air come across his face and heard a sound as of a heavy body falling to the floor.

He opened his eyes as he saw Trim springing to his feet in front of him.

There was then the quick crack! crack! of the detective's revolvers and a terrible uproar in the room as the Nanigos found themselves facing an unexpected foe who shot right and left and who shot to kill.

Trim had dropped before them from the smoke hole in the roof.

A man went down with every shot and he fired so fast that no one came within reach either of himself or of the bound victims.

In the midst of the clatter the front door was burst in and a squad of Mexican police entered.

Thrown into confusion, terrified and some of them badly wounded, the Nanigos could not make long resistance to the officers.

The work of capture was completed within a minute after Trim's sudden entrance.

The detective having made known his plan for the capture of the villains at police headquarters, had hurried to his hotel to warn Parmenter.

There he found that a Mexican had inquired for him and learning from a bystander that Parmenter had been seen walking away with the caller, Trim suspected what had happened.

He hurried with all speed to the Nanigos' headquarters, arriving just at the time the police did, who had gone by a different route.

No sound came through the thick walls to the street and Trim feared that the dreadful work of murder had been done.

Telling the police not to make their attack upon the door until he should give the signal, he hastened around to the back and climbed again to the roof just as Parmenter uttered his desperate cry.

This was enough to give Trim a clew to the situation.

He accordingly shouted his signal to the police and let himself down through the smoke hole with the result described.

With this capture the Society of Nanigos in the State of Jalisco was entirely broken up and young Parmenter was enabled to develop his mining interest without interruption or danger.

The members of the society arrested elsewhere were all convicted and dealt with according to Mexican law.

As it was well known that this society was not limited to any one locality, Trim was not surprised to come across them in his work at a later time.

He found himself dealing with a branch of this organization in an investigation that he made not long after his Mexican experience.

The story of this matter is told in "Trim in the Crescent City; or, The Break in the Levee," No. 23 New Nick Carter Library.

[THE END.]

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